

Letter and enclosure from J. Fearon to Alexander Graham Bell, June 29, 1914

J. Fearon PRINCIPAL School for the Deaf HALIFAX, N. S. 29th June 1914. Dear Dr. Bell,

I am sending you a copy of a letter I received the other day from a most sympathetic, observant and intelligent mother of a deaf child. Will you kindly read it and if you think it worth while send it to the Volta Review.

How little ordinary medical practitioners, and even the most of ear specialists, know about the condition of the deaf! I have written the mother of this child to say that I believe the cause of her trouble is imperfect hearing, but must see the child before I give a decided opinion. Would you kindly let me know what you think of the child?

Many thanks for the kindly interest you have taken in Christie McKinnon. She is doing well.

Yours very sincerely, J. Fearon

(Copy) Florenceville, R.F.D.1. June 24th 1914. To the Principal of School for Deaf. Mr. Fearon. Dear Sir,

We have a little girl who does not talk only a few words and we are very anxious to get her into a school where articulation is taught. Only a day or two ago I learned of your school, through Mr. Manuel, Presbyterian minister of Florenceville. Not knowing of any other school, we wrote our sister living in Massachusetts, about two weeks ago, to see if it would be possible to get her into the school in Boston, have not heard from her yet but hastened to write you at once. We did not know there was anything wrong with our child until she was nearly two years old. She said "Papa" when less than a year old and once in a while other words; if she did not pay attention when we spoke to her, we thought it was because she was so busy at her play that she did not notice. Then as time went on

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we saw that she was not improving in her speech and that sometimes she seemed to hear perfectly, then at other times did not seem to hear at all when we spoke. At five years of age I took her to Boston, had her examined by specialists both in the Infirmary for Eye and Ear and in the Childrens' Hospital and by Crockett of St. John. They all said that so far as they could see there was no trouble, her vocal organs were perfectly normal and her ears were all right so far as could be seen. Dr. Kierstead of Woodstock, who has seen her more than any other doctor, tells me that he is satisfied that there is a pressure on the nerves of speech, which might have been caused by a fall or blow on the head. She fell downstairs when less than a year old and we do not know of any thing else that might have caused the trouble. She has been going to school here in our common school and last term she learned a lot of words and has a pretty good idea of numbers, up to ten, writes and prints very nicely and can draw a good map of our county and province. I succeeded in getting her to give the sound of every letter. She was the hardest for her to get. She will be nine years old in August and is now very anxious to talk. She says, "hurry up" "I don't know," "stop that," "Hallo, Papa," and lots of other words quite plainly. When I speak loudly she will often immitate the sound, using the exact tone of voice but not the spoken word. A great many times a day she will ask me what we are saying; she seems to hear our voices but does not seem to catch the words. She can hear a watch tick, the dog bark, and even heard a band playing a mile away, and showed me the kind of music by pretending to play on a cornet.

I hope I have not wearied you with so long a letter, but hers is such a peculiar case, I thought perhaps it would be well for me to tell what I could about her. The doctors say that she is not deaf and dumb and we know she is not but we feel that yours is the only kind of a school where she will learn to talk. The children here all sign to her.

Will you kindly tell me what steps will be necessary to get her into your Institution and oblige,

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Yours sincerely, Mrs. Herbert Olmstead, Florenceville. R.F.D.No 1. New Brunswick.